How to Transform Backlash into Buy-in

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These seven principles can help transform backlash into buy-in for your efforts.

1. **Anticipate and prepare for the backlash.** The question is not whether you will encounter backlash in the work of dismantling racism; the question is how you will respond. Simply knowing that will give you the confidence to respond.

   Practice: Spend ten minutes brainstorming where you are most likely to experience backlash and why.

2. **Know your stakeholders.** Invest time in advance of enacting anti-racism training to identify key stakeholders on your staff and governing body, bringing them on board, and inviting them to support you in return.

   Practice: Have three one-on-one conversations with key stakeholders who can support you in a crisis.

3. **Hold on to the narrative.** Effective anti-racism work begins with telling the truth about past racism in order to build an anti-racist future. Keep this goal in mind as you discuss and relate to those who question or actively resist your efforts.

   Practice: Tell the anti-racism narrative of your institution in five minutes or less to the first person you meet on the way to work. Ask them to respond.

4. **Every pushback is an opportunity.** This is a difficult principle to remember in the heat of the moment. The more you can treat those who push back against you as potential allies, the more likely it is that they will become so. Maintain the human connection, keep focused on the issue, and foster a common connection.

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Practice: Role play a case study in your next staff meeting in which you respond to a member of your organization who is dissatisfied with the anti-racism training you have provided.

5. **Vocalized criticism is almost always preferable to unvoiced criticism**. It is far more difficult to reply to the criticism that you don't know than the criticism that you do.

   Practice: Invite criticism in staff meetings and other settings. Embrace it.

6. **Appeal to self-interest.** Make connections between the efforts you have initiated and the benefits to your organization. In short, your efforts can make your institution better.

   Practice: Set time aside for people to practice explaining how to highlight the benefits of your anti-racism efforts.

7. **Persistence matters.** Most of the successful anti-racism efforts have achieve their identified anti-racist goals simply because they kept at it.

   Practice: In your next staff meeting spend a short time identifying concrete ways you can support one other, so your commitment to dismantling racism remains strong a year from now and continues for at least five years into the future.

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